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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4489
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001208

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS: POLITICAL LEADERS URGE CALM AFTER
TENSE DAY IN KINSHASA

REF: KINSHASA 1195

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) The atmosphere in Kinshasa is largely calm two days before the scheduled July 30 presidential and legislative elections, despite several outbreaks of violence in the city July 27. As reported reftel, some security forces of Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba (Movement for the Liberation of Congo, MLC) fired their weapons into the air during Bemba's march from the airport to a local stadium for a political rally. Some of his supporters subsequently took to the streets in the Masina district of Kinshasa, tearing down some of President Kabila's campaign posters and looting and burning several buildings.

¶2. (C) In the wake of the violence, three policemen were reportedly killed and 18 wounded, five of them seriously. One civilian was also reportedly killed during the demonstrations. Nine police vehicles were destroyed, and five police stations ransacked as MLC supporters stole weapons that had been seized earlier in the day from marchers who were accompanying Bemba during his procession into Kinshasa. Other locations damaged the night of July 27 included the headquarters of the High Media Authority, two churches -- including the Church of the Eternal Army (headed by a Kabila supporter, Sony Kafuta) -- and the Congolese Observatory for Human Rights. A local bar where popular musician Werrason (a Kabila supporter) performs was also destroyed.

¶3. (C) Ambassador spoke to MLC Secretary General (and Minister of Budget) Francois Mwamba July 28 regarding the incidents of the previous night. Mwamba said he and the party deplored the violence and did not support such actions. The Ambassador added that it is important at this point for political leaders to encourage their members to be calm during the elections period, especially since people are "on edge" and thus tensions are running very high. Mwamba agreed and said, "You can count on us." In a separate conversation, Ambassador also spoke with Kabila special adviser Augustin Katumba, who strongly criticized the outburst of violence, adding that the "international community needs to control Bemba." Katumba said the PPRD will be sending a message to its followers to refrain from any violence and not let themselves be provoked, as that will only exacerbate the situation.

¶4. (C) Despite earlier indications (reftel) that the jets that flew over Kinshasa the afternoon of July 27 were under the command of Air Force Chief of Staff John Numbi (prompting the firing from Bemba's security forces), the planes were in fact part of the European Union Force (EUFOR) stationed in Kinshasa to provide election security and were on a routine

(but unfortunately unannounced) low-level reconnaissance mission. Kinshasa was abuzz with rumors that the jets -- which flew low over the city -- bombed one of Bemba's buildings in downtown Kinshasa, as the site caught on fire shortly after the planes passed overhead. EUFOR spokesmen denied the planes were responsible for any damage in Kinshasa, including in Bemba's offices. Media reports June 28 also include widely divergent figures for the number of people -- including children -- who allegedly died in the fire; Congolese officials said no deaths resulted from the incident.

15. (C) Comment: The brief outbursts of violence in sections of Kinshasa seemed to have been triggered by Bemba supporters running amok in response to rumors about the fire at Bemba's office and the hysteria that was set off by the EUFOR planes flying low over the city. Political rallies and demonstrations will increase as President Kabila and Vice President Azarias Ruberwa arrive in the capital July 28. The city is anxious as the campaign period comes to a close, and messages from political leaders encouraging citizens to stay calm are definitely warranted to prevent the security situation from getting out of hand. Importantly, Bemba himself was making an appeal for calm at a televised rally even while the scattered but potentially serious acts of violence were taking place. End comment.

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